

How to Rate Honey Bee Brood Patterns

Score your colony's brood pattern on a scale of 1–5 (Figure 102). Determine this score by taking the average score from two to three brood frames that have sealed brood. Do not include frames that have emerging brood or larvae just being sealed over with wax in the average score.

A **score of 1 or 2** on any sealed brood frame could indicate that there is a serious issue with the queen or a brood disease.

A **score of 3** tends to be average and is more common as the queen begins to shut down brood production in the fall.

A **score of 4** is considered above average and can mean your queen is a productive layer and the brood is surviving.

A **score of 5** is a rarity.

In a colony with a poor brood pattern, look for high mite levels, disease, queen problems, or old comb that needs to be replaced. Monitor brood patterns throughout the beekeeping season to detect a decrease score that can indicate a queen or disease problem.

Sometimes a poor brood pattern does not indicate an issue. Common instances are a new queen just getting going with her egg laying or a queen slowing down her egg laying in fall. Stored pollen or nectar in the brood nest can result in a poorer looking pattern. While this is not a problem in terms of colony health, it may mean the colony is preparing to swarm.

If brood patterns are a 3 or higher, still look closely at the brood. For example, note the queen cell in the pattern representing a score of 3 and uncapped brood in 4. A good pattern does not always mean the absence of an issue.

Figure 102. Rating scale of brood patterns from 1 to 5, with 1 being poor and 5 being excellent.

